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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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- ART. I. — 1. *Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting, in Compliance with the Resolution of the 9th ultimo, a System of National Defence.* Document No. 206. 26th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives.
2. *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors of the United States Military Academy.* June, 1840.

IN a former article, which reviewed a portion of the War Department documents of the twenty-sixth Congress,\* we intended to close our remarks on the *coast defence* with some allusions to Mr. Poinsett's plan of organizing the militia, as exhibited in those documents, developing, as it did, a part of the means with which he proposed to make that defence effective and economical. The article, however, did not appear, until further communications from the same quarter, giving the promised details of this plan, had been sent to Congress, with much other kindred matter; which, presenting the subject in new relations, rendered all remarks, not having that additional matter in view, imperfect and premature in their character. We have now all those documents before us, but we have not placed the title of that which gives the proposed reorganization of the militia among those at the head of this article, because it is probably abandoned at the present time, or in its present shape. The President himself seems now to entertain doubts of its constitutionality.

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\* See *North American Review*, Vol. LI. pp. 158 *et seq.*

This is sufficient to decide its fate. We hope, however, that the attempt at some sort of reorganization will be renewed at a more propitious season. Much of Mr. Poinsett's plan was good ; that of the classification, order of service, &c. ; but the scheme of instructing and disciplining the militia is fallacious. As well might mechanics be taught their craft by a few days' training each year, as militiamen, by the same process, the duties of a soldier. Arm and organize the militia, and leave the rest to emergencies. Actual service does more in a few weeks, than periodical trainings would do in as many years. The amount of improvement is small and insignificant in either case, but it is available in one case, and is lost in an ever-shifting multitude in the other. Discipline did nothing at Bunker's Hill. All was effected by sharp-shooting under cover. It was the same at New Orleans. The faculty of firing well belongs to all our people. And those who expect to make a beneficial use of militia hereafter, must do as has been done heretofore, — place it in situations where this, its best and almost only available qualification, may be developed to advantage. Such situations may be found, or be formed, in all wars. Hence militia should always be a reliance in the defence of a country. It can often be serviceable, even without discipline ; and no more should be expected of it, as discipline is unattainable by it. We, of course, here speak of the mass of the militia. Independent companies are an exception, as we shall have occasion to remark in the subsequent pages.

The " Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting, in Compliance with the Resolution of the 9th ultimo, a System of National Defence," dated May 12th, 1840, forms a document of extraordinary interest to the nation. The Report embraced by it is the result of deliberations by a Board of Officers, which combined talent and experience, every way suited to a satisfactory fulfilment of the very important duty assigned to it. We have some ground for self-gratulation, that such a board should have regarded those opinions of a former Secretary of War, on the subject of national defence, which called forth from us some animadversions in the article referred to, as deserving its most earnest and careful attention, with a view to counteract their prejudicial influence on the public mind. Could we have anticipated the entrance of such a champion into the lists, our own comparatively feeble

lance might still have hung upon the wall, as being needless on a side so well furnished with skill and strength. But it will be borne in mind, that nearly four years had elapsed since those celebrated opinions were promulgated, and that, thus far, no effort, commensurate with the emergency, had been made to meet and refute them. It is at last done, however, most triumphantly in this Report of the Board of Officers, — a report that does honor to the service, affording evidence of an amount of science among our military men, and an ability to comprehend all its bearings on modern warfare, that may challenge comparison with these qualities in any other country. If we supposed that the document before us were likely to fall under the notice of the reading public in general, we should deem it supererogation to give such an analysis of its contents as may be compressed within our present limits. But such a diffusion of mere documentary information is not to be expected. Public attention must be sought through a variety of avenues. And we may be allowed to suppose that a periodical work of long standing presents one that reaches far and wide. It is, therefore, with an inward assurance that we are performing a good service, that we so soon again invoke reflecting men to bestow a portion of their thoughts upon the subject of *national defence*, repeating the remark before made, that there is scarcely one that more strongly claims the consideration of the patriot and the statesman, or that so little receives it.

The Board presents in the front rank of its Report the question, whether “the navy is the true defence of the country,” as one that had come prejudged and determined from a “high official source,” disturbing “the public confidence” in a system, founded on other means, which had long been its chief reliance ; but examines it solely with a reference to this branch of our national defence as an *exclusive* trust for our national safety. No doubt is expressed, as none could have been felt, of its eminent fitness to perform its legitimate and customary part in the great duty of defensive and offensive warfare. The brilliancy its achievements have shed over every belligerent era of our history cannot be obscured. But its home is on the deep ; and the notion, that it constitutes “our first and best fortification,” has no parallel but in the act of the combatant, who spreads his hand on his breast, as a substitute for shield and breastplate, when it

should be wielding the sword on every side, leaving the *vis inertiae* of such a duty to "sterner stuff," to less permeable matter. It is demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt in this Report, that any attempt to secure our seaports, in time of war, by a reliance on naval, or floating, defences alone, would, in this country, with its many points of this character, require a naval establishment of an enormous magnitude. Supposing the war to be with Great Britain, and her ports fortified in the usual manner, while our ports depended on naval means for defence; her fleet, which would be unnecessary for home defence, could select its point of attack upon our shore, without giving any hint of her intentions. The present adaptation of steam to ocean navigation places the arrival of a fleet at its destination within the limits of something like certainty. Warning is almost out of the question, and forms no element in the calculation. The attack will be the first admonition to defend. Under such circumstances, what complete, or even common, security would there be, but in such a force at each accessible and important point as would match the invader? It is true, that portions might be left comparatively weak. Achilles would then be pierced in the heel, or wherever most vulnerable. Whether the defence be complete, or only imperfect, the naval establishment required would be immense; for even twice the amount of the enemy's disposable force would be an intolerable burden, while it would prove little better than "looped and windowed raggedness" as a panoply for the maritime frontier.

It has latterly been a common opinion, that the introduction of steam power upon the high seas is likely to modify greatly the features of war, and also, perhaps, the system of fortification. The force of this opinion is most elaborately examined by the Board. We cannot give the details of this examination. It is obvious, however, upon slight reflection, that, when steam batteries are relied upon, the attacking and resisting power act under equal advantages, which are rendered otherwise only by the accident of more or less strength in the number of batteries or weight of metal used by the respective parties. The ability of the resisting or stationary party to make use of batteries, which, while they lose in mobility, gain in solidity, by thickened bulwarks or sides, is rendered nugatory by the use of shells, whose destructiveness is in proportion to that thickness, where the materials, as must

always be the case with wood, are permeable, and easily riven in pieces. Steam batteries cannot, therefore, be supposed to change the nature of relative force.

The Board concludes this portion of its Report with the following remarks ;

“ We should not have gone so much at length into a branch of our subject, wherein the conclusions appear to be so obvious and incontrovertible, but for the prevalence of opinions which we consider, not erroneous merely, but highly dangerous, and which, we think, must give way before the exhibition of the truth. We do not anticipate any formidable objections to the positions assumed, nor to the illustrations ; but, even should all these, in the form in which we have presented them, be objected to, we may still challenge opposition to the following broad propositions, namely, 1. If the sea-coast is to be defended by naval means exclusively, the defensive force, at each point deemed worthy of protection, must be, at least, equal *in power* to the attacking force ; 2. As, from the nature of the case, there can be no reason for expecting an attack on one of these points rather than on another, and no time for transferring our state of preparation from one to another, after an attack has been declared, each of them must have assigned to it the requisite means ; and, 3. Consequently, this system demands a power in the defence as many times greater than that in the attack, as there are points to be covered.”

Having disposed of this branch of the subject, the Board, “ believing that a well-digested system of fortifications will save the country from the danger attending every form of defence by naval means, and the intolerable expense of a full provision of those means,” next proceeds “ to show that such a system is worthy of all reliance ” ; adding, that

“ There has been but one practice among nations, as to the defence of ports and harbours ; and that has been a resort to fortifications. All experience that history teaches is on one side only ; it is the opposition of forts, or other works comprehended under the term *fortification*, to attacks by vessels ; and, although history affords some instances wherein this defence has not availed, we see that the resort is still the same. No nation omits to cover the exposed points upon her sea-board with fortifications, and to confide in them.”

This broad statement is sustained by arguments and illustrations that would seem to leave no doubt behind. Public opinion is easily misled, when experience is not at hand to

prevent or correct its wanderings. A striking instance, leaning one way, opportunely seized upon, prevails against a long record of opposing facts. We cannot conjecture what instance of this kind led to the conclusion before alluded to, that ships were our "first and best fortification," as nearly all reading, and reflections suggested by it, would appear to tend another way. Some of the more prominent instances of attack and defence furnished by history, where forts and ships were antagonists, are examined by the Board. Each one is exhibited with all its attendant circumstances, so far as they are known; and sufficient is known in each case to prove, that guns on shore are superior to guns afloat. Gibraltar, in 1782, is eminent as an example of the inefficiency of floating batteries; also Algeziras, in 1801, — comprehending ships under that term. In the latter instance, there was a great disparity in favor of the assailing fleet, which, however, could not avert a signal failure, produced mainly by a few guns, well placed and managed, in battery on shore. The attack on Fort Moultrie, during our Revolution, is not forgotten; when vessels, carrying more than two hundred and fifty guns, "were defeated with great loss of life, and injury to the vessels," by thirty guns behind a palmetto rampart. Copenhagen has been supposed to furnish a conspicuous proof of the power of a fleet operating against a strongly defended place. All the circumstances of this memorable event are brought under review by the Board, and it appears that the contest, up to the time when Nelson proposed the parley that concluded it, was between vessels and vessels. The batteries were unable to interfere, either from remoteness or relative position, the Danish fleet being between the most important of them and the enemy, until nearly the last hour of the combat. The struggle was therefore naval exclusively, and the victory was over the floating force. No inference, therefore, as to the relative strength of fortifications and fleets can be drawn from this event. It furnishes no argument either one way or the other.

Lord Exmouth's attack on Algiers, which bears more immediately on the question, is also presented by the Board in all its known details. The fleet of the English and Dutch mounted about one thousand guns, while about three hundred and twenty were on shore, though not more than two hundred of the latter were able to operate in the action. The loss of

killed and wounded in the combined forces was about nine hundred, notwithstanding the Algerine batteries permitted Lord Exmouth to take his position without firing a gun. Even if better and more promptly served guns on shore had been likely to avert the issue, — a most triumphant one for Lord Exmouth, — the event, under any aspect, shows the far greater power of annoyance in guns on shore, than in guns afloat. No one can doubt for one moment, that, had the guns of the Algerine battery been afloat, they would have been silenced by the assailing fleet with as little effort as loss. Nor can we resist the belief, that, had the two hundred guns on shore been skilfully, opportunely, and perseveringly managed, Lord Exmouth would have failed to dictate terms to the Dey. As it was, it is not certain that those terms might not have been rejected with impunity, as the fleets had taken advantage of a land breeze to haul off to a safe distance from those guns, under which it might have safely awaited the result of negotiations, had they been effectually silenced.

Two or three other comparatively minor affairs are cited, which, however, most clearly prove the “superiority which guns on shore must always, in certain situations, possess over those of shipping.” One was, when a martello tower, armed with only one gun, beat off one or two British ships of war, with little injury to itself. Another, where Sir Sidney Smith, with an eighty-gun ship and two frigates, fired successive broadsides at a two-gun battery on Cape Licosa, until his ammunition was nearly expended ; when, finding the return fire destructive and unabated, he landed a small party, and compelled, or induced, the commanding officer to capitulate, who had had one of his two guns dismounted for some time ; so that, as the British authority, from which the account is taken, states, “an attack of an eighty-gun ship and two frigates had been resisted by a single gun on shore.”

The Board, in commenting on these instances, remark ;

“ Here are two examples ; 1. A single heavy gun, mounted on a tower, beat off one or two British ships. 2. A barbette battery, containing two guns, beat off a British eighty-gun ship, supported by two frigates. It would seem that no exception can be taken to either instance, as trials of relative power. There is no complication of circumstances on one side or the other ; nothing to confuse or mislead ; all is perfectly simple and plain. A small body of artillery, judiciously



posted on shore, is attacked by armed vessels bearing forty or fifty times as many guns ; and the ships, unable to produce any effect of consequence, are beaten off. The cases present no peculiar advantages on the side of the batteries, either as regards position or quality ; for both were immediately reduced by a land attack."

The Board states that the representation of both affairs is taken from " British military writers." The victorious party may represent the results as still more to " the disadvantage of the ships."

" The affair of Stonington," — an event of our war of 1812, — is also most properly alluded to by the Board, as showing, not only the gallantry of our " citizen volunteers," but the advantage of guns on shore over those afloat. In this affair, only two eighteen pounders, behind a battery three feet high, repulsed a sloop of war, which sustained considerable loss, without inflicting any.

These small affairs contain volumes of instruction and encouragement. They are too often regarded as chance-issues, which are not likely to occur again, even under similar circumstances. But the truth is, that such trials are always likely to end as those ended. The shore guns have an immense superiority over guns afloat. An extract from the Report of the Board on this subject will enlighten the most ignorant, and convince the most unwilling.

" A ship is everywhere equally vulnerable ; and large as is her hull, the men and guns are everywhere concentrated within her ; on the other hand, in the properly constructed battery, it is only the gun itself, a small part of the carriage, and now and then a head or an arm above the parapet, that can be hurt ; the ratio of the exposed surfaces being not less than fifteen or twenty to one. Next, there is always more or less motion in the water, so that the ship gun, although it may have been pointed accurately at one moment, at the next will be thrown entirely away from the object, even when the motion in the vessel is too small to be otherwise noticed ; whereas, in the battery, the gun will be fired just as it is pointed, and the motion of the ship will merely vary to the extent of a few inches, or at most two or three feet, the spot in which the shot is to be received. In the ship there are, besides, many points exposed, that may be called vital points. By losing her rudder, or portions of her rigging or spars, she may become unmanageable, and unable to use her strength ; she may receive

shots under water, and be liable to sink ; she may receive hot shot, and be set on fire, and these damages are in addition to those of having her guns dismounted, and her people killed, by the shot which pierce her sides, and scatter splinters from her timbers ; while the risks of the battery are confined to those mentioned above."

The instruction to be derived from a consideration of the foregoing events is, that an attack by vessels of war upon exposed and nearly undefended parts of the coast, should be fearlessly met by such means of resistance, namely, a few cannon, a few spades, willing hands and stout hearts, as most maritime places afford ; and the encouragement may justly be entertained, that the attack, if confined to the water, (and detachments are seldom made from the crew, to land in populous districts,) will generally be repulsed.

But the most modern and startling instance of trial between these antagonist forces, that is, between guns afloat and guns ashore, is that of the castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa ; which affair, having been marked by (as it is generally supposed) the unaccustomed use of horizontal, hollow, or Paixhan's shells, (all the same,) and an unexpected result, was for some time thought to have revolutionized the mode of coast attack and defence. The fall of this celebrated strong-hold, after such a brief cannonade, could be accounted for only by supposing that there had been introduced into the attack a new means of destruction, having a power against which no calculations had been made. The Board has subjected this interesting and not very well understood event to a strict scrutiny, and analyzed all its circumstances, until we are satisfied, that its true and just bearing upon the future is ascertained and fixed. Admiral Baudin had a naval force, including two bomb-ketches, which mounted one hundred and eighty-eight guns, or ninety-four on a broadside ; and the castle had twelve twenty-four pounders and four sea-mortars engaged. The action lasted six hours, when, two magazines having exploded in the castle, and there being a well-grounded apprehension that "six other similar magazines" would also explode, (for there were all these deposits of powder or ammunition in the castle, which were not bomb-proof,) the Mexicans capitulated. The French fired over eight thousand shot at the castle, but produced no effect in preparing the way for a sword-in-hand assault, which was contemplated the following

morning. That great quantity of missiles no doubt marred and indented the walls to a considerable extent, but (as the Board not too strongly remarks) "might have been fired the other way," so far as they contributed to effect a breach, — the only way in which such a preparation could hope to be made by such means.

This castle, as we have before remarked, had been somewhat celebrated, during the revolutionary struggles of Mexico, for its strength. It was supposed that no ordinary means could subdue it. The result of this attack does not prove, that, had its interior been protected from explosions in the ordinary manner, its character in this respect was undeserved. The usual and indispensable precaution of giving all powder deposits bomb-proof roofs was here most unaccountably neglected. The mail-clad warrior was in the battle without his helmet. Had Admiral Baudin advanced his bomb-ketches alone, they might have produced, it is not improbable, unaided, all the causes, that is, the explosions within the castle ("one of which is reported to have buried sixty men in its ruins"), which led to the capitulation. An observance of this simple precaution, — a precaution we are inclined to believe not neglected with respect to any other magazines of consequence on the North American coast, — might, and no doubt would, have reversed the decision of this memorable trial.

The Board has not dwelt too long or minutely on this event. Inferences were likely to be drawn from it, which might have unsettled firmly and justly established opinions, and warranted the introduction of innovations of a dangerous character. The doubts of the day, admitted without due reflection, were gathering strength from an instance, that appeared to prove that fortifications were about to become powerless before fleets, particularly when aided by the Paixhan shells, which were generally thought to have mainly contributed to the reduction of St. Juan d'Ulloa. This redoubtable shell, which had wrought with such tremendous and unanticipated energy in the work of destruction, has been exhibited by the Board in its true light, which divests it of much of its terrors. We cannot, in justice to the subject, attempt to condense this portion of its Report, which says ;

"We fully believe, that the free use of these shells will have an influence of some importance on the relative force of ship

and battery ; but that influence must be the very reverse of what has been predicted. How are the batteries to be affected by them ? It can be but in two ways ; first, the ship gun having been pointed so as to strike a vital part, — that is to say, a gun or carriage, — the shell may explode at the instant of contact. This explosion may possibly happen thus opportunely, but it would happen against all chances ; and, if happening, would probably do no more than add a few men to the list of killed and wounded. For reasons that will soon appear, it is to be doubted whether the probability of dismounting the gun would be so great as if the missile were a solid thirty-two-pound shot. Secondly, if it be not by dismounting the guns, or killing the garrison, the effects anticipated from these missiles must result from the injury they do the battery itself. Now we are perfectly informed, by military experience, as to the effect of these shells upon forts and batteries ; for the shells are not new, although the guns may be so, — the eight-inch and the ten-inch shells having always been supplied in abundance to every siege train, and being perfectly understood, both as to their effects and the mode of using them.

“ Were it a thing easily done, the blowing away of the parapets of a work (a very desirable result to the attacking party) would be a common incident in the attacks on fortifications ; but the history of attacks by land or water affords no such instance ; the only practicable way yet discovered of demolishing a fortification, being by attaching a miner to the foot of the wall ; or by dint of solid shot and heavy charges fired unremittingly, during a long succession of hours, upon the same part of the wall, in order not only to break through it, but to break through it in such a manner, that the weight and pressure of the incumbent mass may throw large portions of the wall prostrate. This, the shortest and best way of breaching a wall, requires, in the first place, perfect accuracy of direction ; because the same number of shots, that, being distributed over the expanse of a wall, would merely peel off the face, would, if concentrated in a single deep cut, cause the wall to fall ; and it requires, moreover, great power of penetration in the missile, — the charge of a breaching-gun being, for that reason, one third greater than the common service charges. Now the requisite precision of firing for this effect is wholly unattainable in vessels, whether the shot be solid or hollow ; and, if it were attainable, hollow shot would be entirely useless for the purpose, because *every one of them would break in pieces against the wall*, even when fired with a charge much less than the common service charge. This is no newly discovered fact ;

it is neither new nor doubtful. Every hollow shot thrown against a wall of a fort or battery, if fired with the velocity affording any penetration, will unquestionably be broken into fragments by the shock.

"After so much has been said about the effect of these shells upon the castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa, it was deemed advisable, although the results of European experiments were perfectly known, to repeat, in our own service, some trials touching this point. A target was therefore constructed, having one third part of the length formed of granite, one third of bricks, and the remaining third of freestone. This was fired at by a Paixhan gun, and by a thirty-two pounder, from the distance of half a mile, and the anticipated results were obtained, namely; 1st, whether it was the granite, the brick, or the freestone, that was struck, the solid thirty-two-pounder shot penetrated much deeper into the wall, and did much more damage, than the eight-inch hollow shot; and, 2dly, these last broke against the wall in every instance that the charge of the gun was sufficient to give them any penetration.

"From all this it appears incontrovertibly, that, as regards the effects to be produced upon batteries by shells, solid shot are decidedly preferable to hollow shot; and the ship, that, contemplating the destruction of batteries, should change her long twenty-four or thirty-two pounder guns for Paixhan guns, would certainly weaken her armament." . . . . "The use of these hollow missiles by batteries against vessels, is, however, an affair of a different character. The shells do not break against timber; but, penetrating the bulwarks, they, in the first place, would do greater damage than solid shot, by making a larger hole, and dispersing more splinters; and having, as shot, effected all this injury, they would then augment it, many fold, by exploding."

The Report further adds on this subject, (we regret that our limits forbid us to continue to quote,) that these shells will generally, in close actions, pass through one side and explode at the other side of the vessel; that, if they were permitted, by the thinness of the bulwarks, to pass through and through, the damage would be much diminished; and hence, it suggests, that the use of these shells may "lead to a reduction in the thickness" of these bulwarks; concluding with these remarks;

"The facts of history, and the practice of warlike nations, are in perfect accordance with the conclusions of theory. The results that reason anticipated have occurred again and

again. And as long as, on one side, batteries are formed of earth and stone, and, on the other, ships are liable to be swallowed up by the element on which they float, or to be deprived of the means by which they move ; so long as they can be penetrated by solid shot, set on fire or blown up by hot shot, or torn to pieces by shells, the same results must inevitably be repeated at each succeeding trial."

We are persuaded that few readers, who are led to look into this article, will deem the space allotted to this portion of our subject too extended. It is highly important that just views, in this respect, should be open to the public generally. Common studies are unavailing for this purpose. It is only by deviating occasionally into strictly professional grounds, that the truth can be seen. With those who aspire to the standing of legislators, this truth is indispensable, and it is necessary to all who would comprehend the course of events, and their influence on the customs of war and the destinies of nations.

Having satisfactorily demonstrated that naval means are ineffectual as a sole or principal reliance for coast defence, the Board next considers the value of the usual mode of effecting this object, that is, by fortifications. We do not intend to dwell on this part of the Report ; not that we regard the considerations we have already bestowed upon it in a prior article as superseding the necessity of further amplification. We regret, that, when that article was written, we had not the advantage of the reasons advanced in the Report in favor of this well-trying and approved mode of giving security to a maritime frontier. As the subject now stands, however, we feel no distrust as to the opinion that will generally be formed respecting the preference of this mode over all others. Empiricism should have no sway in a matter involving such incalculable interests. The mistake of one era would be visited, in its consequences, upon the third and fourth generation.

The Report states a fact, which strongly illustrates the propriety of thus securing our commercial cities. The great fire in the city of New York, in 1835, is said to have consumed property to more than the value of \$ 17,000,000. This was the work of a few hours, and might be repeated at almost any moment by the stroke of an enemy, who found no fortifications, or adequate naval force, to oppose his progress ;

augmenting the destruction a thousand fold, if he chose to involve the shipping, and the city generally, in the ruin. It is true, that the laws of civilized warfare forbid all this, except the destruction of the shipping, unless a military occupation of the place, — a most probable occurrence, — were to justify it. But every enemy, having a wealthy place at his control, feels authorized to levy contributions as a price of exemption from such a fatal calamity. The amount of such contributions cannot be calculated, depending, as it does, on the cupidity, generosity, or state of temper at the moment, of the military or naval arbiter in the case ; but it is generally measured by the ability to pay, and the value of the boon conceded. What is the cost of the works proposed to cover this great mart of our country ? Say about \$ 5,000,000. If it were double, or treble, would it be prudent or expedient to hesitate about the expenditure ? Besides, what is the amount of revenue, which is poured into the national coffers by this commercial city ? One quarter's receipts would almost case her in a coat of mail ; while the neglect of this paramount duty might, by a most probable event of war, deprive the nation, in one year, of an amount that would half encase the whole United States in the same manner.

All other works of defence besides fortifications are liable to constant, extensive, and even total, decay. It is not so with walls constructed of stone, brick, or even earth. There is much about fortifications, we know, that is destructible by time and the elements. They must be preserved, repaired, or renewed, at an ever-recurring expense ; still the main expense is only at the outset. Once made, the wall stands by its own strength, and scarcely begins to crumble in the course of an age. Strong places are now standing which have stood for ages ; and even the " Indian hill " retains its form for a century, if spared by the plough. The force of these facts is not impaired by the well-known calls that are annually made for appropriations to repair forts, &c. These repairs, though expensive, are trifling compared with the first cost of the works. Nor is this continual expense an objection to them. As well might we cease to build houses, because the expense does not terminate with the erection.

In concluding its " views on the general subject of the defences of the coast," the Board very properly dwells for a time on the mode of garrisoning the forts, without resorting

to such an augmentation of the regular army, as their number and size would seem to demand. The *militia* is recommended as the main reliance. This may at first excite surprise; and indeed the proposition, without explanation, would be deemed wholly inadmissible. Mr. Poinsett's first plan of organizing and applying this force is not suggested. It is unnecessary to state the reasons which might discountenance such a suggestion. The Board looks to no new and comprehensive change in this vast, unwieldy mass of national strength, — a change that it would require much time to produce, even if the opposition, which has ever thus far stood in its way, were to be withdrawn, — but proposes only to use such force as already exists, is already found organized in most if not all our maritime cities.

It is well observed by the Board, that the militia is very inefficient, or incompetent, only in the field. There, where operations are successful through that discipline and skill which are acquired by long service alone, — such service as no militia ever will be, or can be, or ought to be, subjected to in this country, — an uninstructed, discordant multitude must always anticipate defeat. Such a consequence is as inevitable, as that an awkward and unwary clown, however strong, will be floored by an expert pugilist, however comparatively weak. But there is a description of military force in all our cities, that is far more in advance of the great body of the militia in all the qualities of organization and efficiency, than it is behind the regular army in these qualities. This force is formed by the volunteer companies of those places. The character of these companies is well known to the country. Most of them have aptitude in manœuvring, perform the manual exercise expertly, are animated by an *esprit de corps*, have confidence in their officers, and, to a certain extent, are strictly subordinate to their authority. In all these important respects, they are not only above the militia in general, but are wholly unlike them. Not one of these qualities, as a general rule, belongs to the mass of the citizen soldiers of the country; nor can they ever be imparted to it in any beneficial degree. These volunteer companies form a respectable numerical force along the whole sea-coast, — perhaps already sufficient for the purpose in view, — and, by suitable legislative encouragement, may be increased to any desirable amount. Such encouragement



should readily be accorded, particularly on the sea-board and on the other frontiers. The idea that has been started in some State legislatures, when incorporations of this kind have been proposed, namely, that they savour of exclusive privileges, and deduct so much from the efficiency of the militia in general, is warranted neither by reason nor by experience. If there be any privilege belonging to these companies, it is that of incurring an extraordinary expense, and bestowing an extraordinary share of time, in order to qualify themselves to serve their country. Leave the materials of which they are composed with the main body, and that body remains the same unorganized and undisciplined mass ; take them out, and they form new combinations, and assume new and superior characteristics, — characteristics which for ever remain dormant until this separation takes place. Like certain chemical separations and combinations, the improvement is not in the elements, but in the condition, in the association.

With respect to the duty to be performed, the Board says ;

“ There is no difficulty in the service of fixed batteries. The militiaman has to be taught merely the service of a single gun, which is very simple. He must learn to use the rammer and the sponge, the handspike and the linstock, to load, to run to battery, to trail, and to fire ; these are all. Each of these operations is of the utmost simplicity, depending on individual action, and not on concert ; and they may be taught in a short time. There is no manœuvring, no marching, no wheeling. The squad of one gun may be marched to another ; but the service is the same. Even the art of pointing a cannon is, to an American militiaman, an art of easy attainment, from the skill all our countrymen acquire in the use of fire-arms.

“ The mode of applying this force may be illustrated by the case of any of our cities on the sea-board. The forts and batteries, being put in perfect condition, should be garrisoned, (at least the more important ones,) by a small body of regular artillery, such as our present military force could supply, and sufficient for the preservation of the public property, and to afford indispensable daily guards. To these should be added two or three men of the ordnance department, especially charged with the condition of the armament and ammunition, and two or three engineer soldiers, whose sole duty should be to attend to the condition of the fortifications ; keeping every

part in a state of perfect repair. In certain important works, however, that would be exposed to siege, or to analogous operations, it would be prudent, especially in the beginning of a war, to keep up a more considerable body of regular troops."

The Board makes further suggestions, as, that this "volunteer force should be divided into detachments, without disturbing the company organization," and "assigned to the several works, according to the war garrisons of each, from four to six men, according to circumstances, being allowed to each gun."

We have not space to give even a condensed view of all parts of this most important plan of garrisoning, in time of war, our forts and batteries, without resorting to a burdensome augmentation of the regular army, and without relying upon any new mode of organizing the militia; merely depending upon means already, or readily, made fit for application to such a purpose, in every city that looks to such works for defence. This force is termed a *volunteer* force, because it is not anticipated that it will hesitate to come forward in time of need. A state of war throws the business of all maritime cities, more or less, into embarrassment, and greatly diminishes the demand it has upon the time of those who carry it on. Hence, their inhabitants can send out a quota for garrison service, at such times, without the usual inconvenience. But even if sacrifices were to be made, who will be found more ready to make them, than the members of the volunteer companies, which generally embrace, not only the sinew and much of the talent of the place, but those persons who have a large stake to defend, in "family, property, and social and civil relations"? Besides, they will be within reach of the resources of home.

Let us, by way of illustration, suppose that the city of New York were prepared, as she partly now is, and, we trust, in a few years will wholly be, for a state of war, and that she were fitted for its emergencies by having her many forts and batteries garrisoned after the manner proposed by the Board; that is, with a body of regular troops, combined with volunteer companies, drawn from the immediate neighbourhood; the volunteers, in such combination, being susceptible of fulfilling every required duty in a very short time, and leaving their homes and occupations with little comparative detriment to the latter. And what was the aspect of the same

place in 1814, when threatened by invasion ? Her defences were few and imperfect ; and, in default of ramparts of stone and brick, she believed she had no alternative but to heap up masses of men, which she did, until a wall of flesh and blood appeared to surround her. It is true, through the active use of the spade and mattock, lines of circumvallation were hastily thrown up in front of this living wall ; which, however, could have stayed a disciplined and persevering enemy, probably, only a few hours. More than twenty-five thousand men were at one time, and for a considerable time, on duty on and around the island of Manhattan. Whole counties were drained of their population, all “ occupations ” being “ gone ” but that of war ; farms were neglected, trades suspended, shops nearly all closed up ; a wide-spread and distressing sacrifice was made for the security of the great mart of that region. No reluctance was manifested by those who felt the most severely the burden of this sacrifice. Every thing was apparently at stake, and still more intolerable burdens might have awaited any dereliction of duty. But such a state of things need not recur. With proper fortifications, New York could mainly defend herself. Her own population, aided by a suitable body of regular troops, — a small body compared with the garrison complement, — all being under the command of an army officer, (for such an officer would at all times be in command,) would effect this great object, with probably no calls upon the interior for support. Under such circumstances, war would be like a cutaneous disease, distressing the surface, but leaving nearly all within untroubled.

These brief statements and reflections must impress every man of common prudence with a sense of the bounden duty of government to avert, by timely preparations, the recurrence of such a state of things ; a duty applicable to every portion of the United States. They show, also, that a system of fortifications, manned in the way proposed, would be an economy of men and money to an amount, that no calculation can ascertain. The cost of fortifications is of a definite character ; great though it be, yet it has its bounds ; while the cost of such a defence as the war of 1812 actually brought upon many portions, and might have brought upon every portion, of the maritime frontier, is illimitable, both as to life and treasure.

The Board concludes its able Report with the following

summary. We extract it entire, because it is pregnant with facts which every statesman and patriot should have ready at his command.

“The works which are likely to be erected on the Atlantic, within a reasonable time, and which are regarded as necessary to a good system of defence, will require war garrisons amounting to 28,720 men; and they will require a further expenditure of \$ 9,176,767. Works called for in like manner upon the Gulf of Mexico coast, will need 4,420 men to garrison them, and a further expenditure of \$ 516,780. Of the whole coast, therefore, the garrisons will amount to 33,140 men, and the expenditures to \$ 9,993,547.

“The remaining works comprised in tables F, of both statements, will require 30,695 men, and cost \$ 19,521,824.

“Making the grand total for the whole sea-coast of the United States, in garrisons for the works, 63,835 men, and in cost, \$ 29,515,371.

“In addition to these statements as to the fortifications, there are corresponding statements of the cost of the ordnance, of the carriages, and of a certain supply of powder and shot, or shells, for each piece, — one statement relating to the Atlantic coast, and the other to the Gulf of Mexico coast. From these it appears, that for the works likely to be erected on the Atlantic coast, within a reasonable time, (that is to say, for the works comprised in the first five tables, A, B, C, D, and E,) there will be needed 2,483 pieces of ordnance, and 4,511 carriages, which will cost \$ 2,252,290.

“For similar works on the Gulf of Mexico coast, there will be needed 296 pieces of ordnance, and 495 carriages, at a cost of \$ 240,720.

“The remaining works named in tables F, of both statements, will require, in addition, 5,447 guns, and 5,554 carriages, which will cost \$ 3,735,330.

“Making the grand total required for the whole sea-coast, 8,226 guns, and 10,560 carriages, at a cost of \$ 6,228,340.

“The time required to construct and put in order the whole system must depend on the amount of the annual appropriation. All that need now be said on the subject is, that in an undertaking necessarily involving so much time, and of such vital importance, there should be no relaxation of diligence. With all diligence, many years must necessarily be consumed. But the work may be too much hurried, as well as too much delayed. There is a rate of progress at which it will be executed in the best manner, and at the minimum cost. If more hurried, it will be defective in quality, and more costly if delayed.

“France was at least fifty years in completing her maritime and interior defences.

“In the report presented by the Engineer Department, in March, 1836, (Senate Document, 1st Session, 24th Congress, Vol. 4, No. 293,) there is a demonstration of the actual economy that will result from an efficient system of sea-coast defence ; which is to the following effect, referring to the document itself for details.

“There is first supposed to be an expedition of 20,000 men at Bermuda, or Halifax, ready to fall upon the coast. This will make it necessary, if there be no fortifications, to have ready a force, at least equal, at each of the following points, namely, 1st, Portsmouth and navy-yard ; 2d, Boston and navy-yard ; 3d, Narraganset roads ; 4th, New York and navy-yard ; 5th, Philadelphia and navy-yard ; 6th, Baltimore ; 7th, Norfolk and navy-yard ; 8th, Charleston, S. C. ; 9th, Savannah ; and 10th, New Orleans ; to say nothing of other important places.

“At each of these places, except the last, 10,000 men drawn from the interior and kept under pay, will suffice ; the vicinity being relied on to supply the remainder. At New Orleans, 17,000 men must be drawn from a distance. In a campaign of six months, the whole force will cost at least \$26,750,000.

“The garrisons necessary to be kept under pay for the fortifications in these places will cost for the same time \$8,430,500. The difference (\$18,319,500) will then be only \$3,448,156 less than the whole expense of building these defences, viz., \$21,767,656. Whence it follows, that the expense of these erections would be nearly compensated by the saving they would cause in a single campaign.”

The same document, on parts of which we have thus far been commenting, contains a memorial from Major General E. P. Gaines, of the United States Army, which has attracted some attention, by the exalted military source whence it comes, and the extreme novelty of its general character. In the latter respect, it somewhat resembles the plan proposed by the War Department in 1836. Both propositions depart widely, — almost at a tangent, — from the experience and practice of previous times. This may not be a decisive objection, but it suggests the propriety of much consideration, and naturally leads to doubt and hesitation. The art of war has occasionally been subjected to great changes, but only when the means of carrying it on have been greatly changed.

The invention of gunpowder, and the introduction of fire-arms into use, produced one of these revolutions, — the principal one. But, for the last century and more, the course of military improvement has been gradual and accumulative. One step has been added to another, generally in the same onward line. All Europe has relied upon fortifications for coast defence, and no one, at least of note, until the idea occurred recently in this country, suggested a substitute. These aberrations do not find favor with the thinking part of civilized nations. It is ever regarded as safe, and as safest, to conform to well-tried customs, to be led by approved experience. Neither involves much risk or uncertainty, while all is committed to hazard by abrupt deviations into novelties.

Probably the sober calculations made by the Topographical Bureau, to which this memorial was referred, in order that its propositions might be subjected to some test, will satisfy the public mind, that they are uncertain in all respects, except the expense they involve, which cannot fall short of an enormous amount. It is well stated by the Topographical Bureau, that any plan of running rail-roads from a common centre to the periphery of the United States, which is not based on actual surveys, more or less approximating to the truth, is too undefined to be entertained, excepting as a suggestion. Calculations, resting on grounds so liable to variation, would be shadowy in the extreme, and become the merest hypotheses.

Besides, there are strong objections to the plan, even if it were practicable. One of the heavy items of expense in war is transportation; and a system that supposes the country, in seasons of danger, convulsed to the inmost interior, by a centrifugal rush, would swell this item to a startling magnitude. The true rule is, first to draw from supplies at hand, seeking the more remote only as necessity demands. Such a rule permits most of the interior to remain quietly engaged in its occupations, thus keeping in vigor many of the principal resources of war, and confining the heaviest sacrifices to a comparatively small portion of the body politic. These seasons of danger are in this way deprived of half their power to do harm.

All are aware that facilities of communication enter largely into the sum of military power, of national defence. Good roads, canals, and, above all, rail-roads, augment the capa-

bility of troops to defend a country many fold. One thousand men at the present day, in nearly any populous part of the United States, may safely be pronounced equal to many thousands in 1812. Our army can now be moved, with all its appointments, from one end of the Union to the other, and also from east to west, in time for most of the purposes of a sudden campaign. But these facilities are seldom part of the military system. They are the creations, the avenues, formed by the enterprise and wealth of States, corporations, or individuals, and follow the lead of trade, or pleasure, or the promise of interest. Accommodating the military demands of the country, in war as well as in peace, is a mere incident, a subsidiary benefit. No government, excepting a despotism, undertakes to construct roads, or canals, for military purposes merely, excepting in extreme cases. Such works are the result of causes which are expected to remunerate the cost. They, however, fulfil all military purposes nearly, or quite, as well as if constructed for those purposes alone. Trade and commerce instinctively seek the best routes. They shorten distances, remove obstacles, and in all respects facilitate transportation. With such facilities opening through the country in every direction, connecting its most remote parts together ; with our noble estuaries and rivers, courting navigation up to the very mountains of the interior, where the bellowing steam of boats, starting from opposite borders of the country, almost echo to each other ; with communications so easy, rapid, and economical, government need seek no other means of this kind for its great work of defence ; certainly would not be justified in substituting for them a gigantic system of internal improvement, that has rejected, or not regarded, commercial considerations, but looks to geographical features alone, as if mountains, valleys, rivers, and other topographical features, formed scarcely an element in the calculation.

We have named at the head of this article, besides the "Document" which has suggested the foregoing remarks, the "Annual Report of the Board of Visitors of the United States Military Academy, for the year 1840 ;" not, however, for the purpose of turning attention to the Report of the majority of the Board, (embracing fifteen out of nineteen of its members,) which is, as usual, highly commendatory of that institution, but to endeavour to meet some objections set

forth by the minority, which, "differing from the majority," felt called upon to submit "a separate Report." This minority Report is written with calmness and some liberality of spirit, and, coming from men who have been selected for the express purpose of forming and publishing opinions relative to the Academy, deserves a careful and respectful consideration. If the objections urged be well founded, they should prevail; if otherwise, their want of basis should be made manifest.

We would first notice the very brief and modest doubt of the Alabama member, (who otherwise concurs with the majority Report,) as to the constitutionality of the establishment. On this subject it may be summarily stated, that Congress, in the exercise of its legislative power "to raise and support armies," and "to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces," has enacted that a number of cadets may be appointed as a part of the army, "at no time to exceed two hundred and fifty." It will undoubtedly be admitted, that these cadets, on receiving their warrants, could be arranged, as is the case in many services, in the companies, as a grade intermediate between those of the commissioned and the non-commissioned officers of the army; that they could there be instructed in such way as might be thought best fitted to qualify them for the duties of the commission for which they are candidates; and that the expense of this instruction could be provided for by Congress after the usual manner. This being admitted, (and we do not see how it can be gainsaid,) we will suppose that it may be thought advisable to collect the cadets of a regiment into a body for better improvement, thus to remain until entitled to a commission. This could be done either by enactment or by regulation. And the propriety of it is obvious upon slight consideration. Ten, or even twenty, cadets may be taught by the same instructors, as well as two. Economy, therefore, dictates that they should be embodied for this purpose. Besides, the instruction then becomes uniform, — an important gain.

The same power, which authorizes the embodying, for the purpose of instruction, of the cadets of a regiment, applies to those of a whole army. Congress, in 1812, deemed it expedient to direct, that the cadets then authorized to be raised or appointed, "may be attached, at the discretion of the



President of the United States, as students to the Military Academy," (before that time a school for the cadets of the engineers alone,) "and be subject to the established regulations thereof," &c. This course was taken by Congress to promote both improvement and economy, it being certain that the whole corps of cadets could be improved more highly and more economically, thus concentrated, than if separated among the companies, or even among the regiments. Attached at once to companies, these companies having only the ordinary means of instruction attached to them, the advancement of the cadet in science and the arts would probably be little or nothing. Embodied regimentally, the chances for advancement in these respects would be increased, provided the proper means were furnished, though subjected to liability to constant interruption by the vicissitudes of station and condition incident to such a body of troops. To constitute them a Military Academy, where all would be subjected to an uninterrupted and uniform course of instruction, was deemed the wisest measure. And probably no member of Congress, in authorizing these several steps to be taken, so obviously prudent and beneficial, for the advancement of the army in science, in practical arts, in habits of subordination, and in moral strength, saw any constitutional impediment in the way. And we are inclined to think, that those who now imagine they see them, have not duly considered the origin, progress, and design, of the institution.

The first objection of the minority Report is merely inferable from the manner in which the fact is stated, that "the officers of the army, with but few exceptions," have been selected, since the close of the "last war," "from the graduates of West Point." This "exclusive right," as the Report terms it, would seem to be so well founded, that we should hesitate to suppose the minority gentlemen regarded it as objectionable, if it were not remarked by them, that the graduates have occasionally made the departure from it "a subject of serious objection and complaint." That a graduate of West Point, who "receives a regular degree," (we are quoting the law of Congress, applicable to the case,) "from the Academical Staff, after going through all the classes," should consider himself as certain of being "among the candidates for a commission in any corps, according to the duties he may be judged competent to per-

form," is both natural and, to be expected ; and if others, say citizens, who have not been thus graduated, not thus been qualified, were to supersede them, "objection and complaint" would be looked for from others besides the cadets, — from the public, who have provided for the education of those who are to fill up the army. It is not only proper that the government should thus fill it up, but it is its bounden duty to do so; — a duty as clear and imperative as that which refers to any other military promotion. This "exclusive right" is not, therefore, arrogated to themselves by the cadets ; it is secured to them by law and by custom, and by every consideration of the public good. As to the appointment of citizens to fill up vacancies which remain open at the end of the academic year, after the graduates are disposed of, we shall have occasion to speak shortly. The minority Report does not appear to allude to this exception from the general rule.

The Report next states the annual expense of the institution, and then asks, whether the benefits resulting from it have been commensurate. To prove that they have not, a further statement is made, showing the number of cadets who enter and who are graduated. That so many who enter are *not* graduated, is attributed, in the Report, rather to the "unsuitable character of the materials," than to the bad management of the "Academic Staff." Most persons, in comparing the matriculations with the graduations, would draw inferences highly favorable to the institution. It bespeaks a severity of ordeal, that equally bespeaks a high character in those who pass through it. We should bear in mind that the Military Academy differs in one essential respect from all other seminaries, academies, or colleges in our country. At all other institutions of this kind, the tuition is paid for by the student, and, as long as he submits to the rulers and the rules set over him, he takes his degree as a matter of course. There is no reason for expelling him for negligence or incapacity, except it be extreme. Cadets at West Point, however, enter upon a very different footing. Instead of paying, they are under pay ; and, unless they strictly fulfil their part, maintain a strict conformity with the course prescribed, both as to studies and conduct, they are dismissed. This is both just and proper. It is not intended to educate, at the public expense, any but those whose application and subordination

afford a reasonable promise that that expense will be remunerated in the form of beneficial services. To retain in the Academy any who fail in these respects, would be a palpable violation of duty on the part of its government.

The minority Report, regarding this decrease of numbers as the result of the "bad materials" of which the classes are first formed, suggests a new mode of selecting these materials. Before noticing this mode, it is proper to remark, on the subject of appointments to the Military Academy, that the mode of making them underwent many modifications before it took the present form. Previously to 1816-17, there was no competition for these appointments. The Secretary of War was rarely asked to make them, and most, if not nearly all, of them were the result of recommendations of the Superintendent, or of the officers of the army. Subsequently to that period, when the institution assumed a new character, and exhibited a standard of education, in many high branches of science, that attracted attention and respect from the country at large, the Secretary of War began to have demands upon him from all quarters. The task of deciding which application should succeed, and which fail, was both difficult and invidious. The applications greatly exceeding the number of appointments to be made, it became obviously necessary to adopt some general rule, which could be observed with justice to the public, and without injury to the Academy. The qualifications for admission were determined to be so low as to exclude none who had been within the reach of a common school. Such moderate requirements were found to open the door to ample talent, while it gave no preference to wealth or superior education. Every portion of the country, it was justly thought, should be entitled to its share of chances, and, the number of cadets being almost in proportion to the congressional delegation, it was decided to apportion the appointments accordingly. Such a distribution was recommended by every consideration of fairness, and opposed by no sound reason, as, after all the refinements that may be made upon the subject, every appointment is an experiment.

The next step was, to ascertain who should receive the appointments thus due, or open, to so many and widespread portions of the United States. No President, no Secretary of War, could possess the knowledge requisite to

make a judicious choice among the candidates. Should the rule prevail, of "first come, first served," an impatient and jealous scramble would be likely to ensue. Looking at the whole ground, how natural and rational it was, to turn to the members of Congress, who were at the seat of government, and who knew well the persons and wishes of their respective districts, and to leave to them the recommendation of such candidates as belonged to their districts. This course has now been pursued for some years, and it has filled the Military Academy with young men, who have annually been graduated with honor to themselves, and benefit to their country. That it admits of favoritism, or selections made from partial, local, and even political feelings, is conceded; but when a rule can be proposed which *excludes* all feelings of this kind, which leads to an unerring, or even less erring, choice of "materials," — a choice that would silence all cavil, all objection, — then there will be just cause for change or modification.

In the change recommended by the minority Report, namely, that of leaving this selection to be made by "volunteer companies of the States and Territories," we see only a vagueness of suggestion, that presents scarcely a shadowy outline to the mind. In the first place, volunteer companies are the mere creatures of accident. They are not necessarily in existence anywhere, and might be found nowhere; though they happen to form a most important part of the coast defence, and we hope will be nourished into a more extended and certain existence. But, give them the best character of which they are susceptible, still we do not perceive that they would be the proper depositories of this power of providing candidates for commissions in the regular army. Let it once be determined, that these companies are to furnish the only passports to West Point, and the scramble will be for admission into *them*. And how is this initiation, involving such a desirable privilege, to be determined? And after the company has been formed, consistently with the common right of any member of the community to compose a part of it, how shall the fine gold be separated from the baser metal? The minority gentlemen seemed to apprehend, that "military aptitudes" would show themselves in a way not to be misunderstood, probably recollecting that Achilles, with a sword in his hand, could not be disguised.

even by the drapery of a woman. They seem to believe, that these indications would be so manifest, that selections made under them would avert all abortive probations ; would prevent all resignations and dismissions ; that all Hannibals taken to this altar, would be able to conquer Rome. But, we fear, notwithstanding all these wise precautions, Cannæ might often become a Zama, or a Capua supersede both.

Many of the remarks of the minority Report on the subject of resignations are just. There cannot be a question, that the graduate is bound in duty to render services as an officer, that shall fully reimburse to the public the expense of his education. The obligation is specific as to four years, and should be enforced, as a general rule ; especially if the relaxation produces a necessity of filling up vacancies from civil life, or from persons who have had no previous training for a commission. The inference, however, drawn from the fact stated in this Report, namely, "the resignation of one hundred and seventeen officers" in one year, during the Seminole war, is not altogether fair in its application to West Point, as very many of them were not graduates of that institution ; and there were many causes, which it is unnecessary here to enumerate, at that time in active operation, to produce discouragement and disgust *in* the army, and to open attractive prospects *out* of it. The Florida war probably had little influence on most of the resignations. And it should be mentioned, by way of counterbalance of this imputation cast upon the graduates, that, in several instances, the graduating classes have been sent immediately into the field,—though the regulations allow them four months furlough after graduation,—where they have invariably performed their duty with cheerfulness, spirit, and often with much credit ; while many older officers, those who had not been bred at West Point, were not present to give them the benefit of either precept or example.

The suggestion made by the Report, relative to a change in the age of admission, we only notice to observe, that we do not see how a minor at eighteen is more able "to assume the responsibilities of a contract to serve his country as a soldier," than at sixteen ; unless the minority conceived that a cadet could enlist himself, like a soldier, under the act of Congress of December 10th, 1814. We apprehend,

however, that the "consent" to be obtained by a cadet has no bearing upon this act.

The last objection of this Report, which we will notice, is made to the present "course of instruction" at West Point. The following extract exhibits the opinion entertained by the minority on this subject.

"Attention to the intellectual manifestations of the cadets, and an adaptation of the course of instruction suitable to a full developement of their aptitudes should be regarded. Instead of attempting to impart a profound knowledge of the exact sciences to all, those only who evince a peculiar fitness for such studies should be trained to the utmost limits of their capacity; while those, in whom the martial spirit predominates, should not, with their opening years, have their ardor quenched by the cold process of mathematical demonstrations, nor the minute investigations of scientific studies."

This is not the first time such a suggestion has been made, many having believed, that a change, suited to a greater variety of intellects or dispositions, should be made. It is well known, that other countries have similar institutions, where cadets, or *élèves*, are trained up to different arms of service. This distribution may work beneficially when the institutions branch accordingly. But such is not the case with ours. We have but one military academy. Those, who propose this change of studies, should, at the same time, propose additional institutions, having distinct courses of instruction for engineering, artillery, horsemanship, &c. The minority Report, however, appears to contemplate only one distinction, that is, a separation of the scientific student from the martial aspirant; the Vaubans from the Turennes. It is not worth while to inquire whether this be practicable, nor whether phrenology might not aid in this work of discrimination.

At West Point, it is well known, there is no designation of *arm* in the outset, nor at any intermediate time of the course. The way is open to all, and a generous competition animates whole classes, who find that the highest honors are within reach of intelligent industry and good conduct. That the amount of talent developed, the amount of acquisition made, by the whole class, is far greater under this order of studies, than would result from any other, cannot be questioned. And who is to judge as to the "peculiar

fitness" for the more elevated studies, and as to the "martial spirit," that should not be "quenched by the cold process of mathematical demonstrations," or by "the exact sciences"? Little, we apprehend, needs be said, to convince those who are not misled by specious notions, or who are not prone to theorize themselves into fallacious novelties, that the present simple but thorough mode of instruction at the Military Academy, while it forms men for the highest walks of science, at the same time unfits no one for any military function. On the contrary, the purely military instruction at that school is continuous throughout the whole course. It mingles with the exercises of every day. There is a constant accumulation of knowledge, theoretical and practical, from the first position of the soldier up to the most complicated evolution of the battalion, embracing also suitable inquiries into the art of war, as developed in the history of generalship, strategy, &c., which fits the cadet for the field, or the garrison; while those sciences and arts, which have ever been deemed essential elements in the character of an accomplished officer, are implanted in the mind, with more or less promise of ripening into a harvest of usefulness and honor to the country.

It is satisfactory to find that this Report, which evidently embodies every objection that prejudice against the institution could suggest, concludes with a compliment to the "talents and industry" of the professors and teachers there, and a disclaimer of any intention to imply, by the objections made, "censure, or the slightest want of confidence, in any of the academic staff." Such a tribute from such a quarter speaks much in favor of the Academy, which, we predict, as long as it maintains its present standing, will continue to receive free-will support from its many friends, and to extort commendations from its few enemies.

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